

HOUSE No. 1485

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Kay Khan

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act regarding the classifications system for prisoners in the commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Kay Khan

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

11th Middlesex

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT REGARDING THE CLASSIFICATIONS SYSTEM FOR PRISONERS IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority
of the same, as follows:*

- 1 Whereas, the cost of imprisoning offenders in the prisons, jails, and houses of correction of the
- 2 commonwealth has reached approximately one billion dollars per year; and
- 3 Whereas, no more than ** percent of that cost is at present devoted to education, vocational, and
- 4 therapeutic programming for offenders; and
- 5 Whereas, the cost of imprisoning an offender in a high security correctional facility has reached
- 6 well over fifty thousand dollars per year; and
- 7 Whereas, the cost of imprisoning an offender in a low security or pre-release facility is
- 8 approximately sixty percent of the cost of high security confinement; and
- 9 Whereas, it has been known since at least 1987 that a disproportionate number of incarcerated
- 10 offenders in this commonwealth are confined in high security facilities; and

Whereas, between 1994 and 2004, the percentage of offenders in minimum security facilities declined from twenty three percent to eleven percent and the percentage of offenders in maximum security facilities increased from nine percent to nineteen percent; and

Whereas, twelve percent of Massachusetts offenders are currently being released to our communities from maximum security facilities, which is more than twice the percentage of such releases in other states; and

Whereas, it is more practicable and less expensive to conduct education, vocational, and therapeutic programming for offenders in lower security correctional facilities; and

Whereas, the administrative method for determining the security and rehabilitative programming requirements of each prisoner in the custody of Commonwealth is known as “classification;”

It is hereby resolved, That in order to contain correctional costs and promote the rehabilitation of offenders in a manner that balances the need to prepare offenders to live within the law with the security requirements of public safety; the General Court hereby establishes the following requirements for all classification regulations and procedures promulgated by the commissioner of correction.

Section 2.

Chapter 127 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section *** the following section:—

Section *** . The commission of correction shall promulgate regulations and procedures for the classification of all persons committed to his custody and to the custody of the several sheriffs.

31 Section *** A. The classification regulations and procedures employed by the commissioner of
32 correction shall create an objective, validated, point-based classification system.

33 Section *** B. The classification regulations and procedures employed by the commissioner
34 shall require that no more than fifteen percent of offenders be classified to maximum security
35 correctional facilities at any time, and that no less than thirty percent of offenders be classified to
36 minimum security, including pre-release or work-release correctional facilities, at all times.

37 Section *** C. The classification regulations and procedures employed by the commissioner
38 shall ensure that no less than eighty percent of offenders progress to minimum security or pre-
39 release correctional facilities by the time they have completed eighty percent of the minimum
40 term of their sentence or aggregated sentences.

41 Section 3. The requirements of this section shall apply and control the movement of all
42 incarcerated sentenced offenders through the correctional facilities of the commonwealth
43 notwithstanding the provisions of any other previously enacted legislation.